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ANNUAL ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

American Academy of Medicine,

AT PHILADELPHIA,

OCTOBER 26th, 1882,

BY

TRAILL GREEN, A.M., M.D.,

PRESIDENT OF THE ACADEMY.

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THE

ANNUAL ADDRESS,

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AT ITS

SEVENTH ANNUAL MEETING,

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OCTOBER 26TH, 1882,

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PRESIDENT OF THE ACADEMY.

Published by order of the Academy.

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A RETROSPECTIVE GLANCE

AT THE

ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF THE ACADEMY.

Gentlemen of the American Academy of Medicine:—

Six years have passed away since a few of us met in this city to confer together concerning a subject of great interest to our profession, and to this nation. It was thought that the great Centennial year was the time to do that which would promote the future good of the people through an advance of medical education, as material interests were promoted by the great exhibition. It was a year of joy. From every part of the land the people gathered here to witness the evidences of our growth and prosperity. Other nations joined with us in our celebration, and they learned that a new century's dawn was the forerunner of a flood of light that would show the world that the American people had well improved the opportunities which their independence had provided for them. We meet again while the city is celebrating the Bi-centennial of the landing on these shores of the founder of the city and a great commonwealth, and while we rejoice with them, as they remember the events which they celebrate, we may give an hour of this festive occasion to those things which are connected with the origin and progress of the Academy.

Called again to this chair, you doubtless expect from me some thoughts on the origin and progress of our Academy. And first, it is well to ask, after the lapse of six years since its birth, were we alone in our belief of the necessity of a new organization? Were we alone in our views as to the method by which the profession was to rise to a higher plane of usefulness and honor? Early in our work we showed that there was a decided belief in the mind of the profession that a better preliminary education was needed. But we think it is possible that the general statement of this belief does not influence action, as does the testimony of honored leaders in the profession, whose experience in the schools, as well as in private

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practice, qualified them to judge of the wants of those who were asking admission to the profession.

Dr. John W. Francis said, quite early in the discussion on preparatory studies: "Every youth, previous to his having been engaged in a course of medical studies, should be properly qualified by a suitable preliminary education in classical and mathematical learning." (*Amer. Med. and Philosoph. Reg.*)

Dr. Chapman, President of the first meeting of the American Medical Association, asked: "Does not the commission which accredits you to this Association declare the fact that the profession is environed by difficulties and dangers arising mainly from the too ready admission into it of individuals unworthy of the Association, either by intellectual culture or moral discipline, by whom it is abased?" (*Trans. Amer. Med. Asso.*, Vol. I, p. 8.)

Alexander Stevens, at the same meeting, said: "Were the preliminary qualifications requisite to an admission into private offices and into the medical colleges more enlarged, not only would the standing of the profession be exalted, and its usefulness augmented, but the cause of humanity more truly subserved. (*The same*, p. 243.)

In 1849, Drs. John Ware, Jacob Bigelow, and O. W. Holmes, all medical teachers, and representing the views of the Medical Faculty of Harvard University, stated "that no extension of the term of lectures—no other measures that are contemplated—will raise the character of our profession, till either a liberal education is required as a necessary preliminary to a medical, or till a longer term of study is required of those who have not had such an education.

"One of the greatest obstacles to the improvement of medical education in this country is the deficiency of sufficient preliminary education in those who enter the profession. It is well known that but a very small proportion have had such previous training as is absolutely necessary in order to begin with advantage the study of a science. Many have barely had the common education of our public schools, and some even this in an imperfect manner. Such men have not yet learned how to learn, and yet they start at precisely the same point, and are required to go through the same course of study, as those who have undergone the discipline of a college education." (*The same*, Vol. II, 356–7.)

Drs. W. Hooker, T. W. Blatchford, J. R. Wood and N. S.

Davis, in 1851, expressed themselves as follows: "The laxness of practice which prevails in regard to the preliminary training of medical students is one of the greatest obstacles in the way of raising the standard of education and attainment in the profession. One practice which, we believe, is followed in nearly all our medical schools, has a peculiarly bad influence. We refer to the fact that all students are placed upon the same level in regard to the length of their required term of study before they can be candidates for a degree. There certainly should be a distinction made in this respect between those who have had a deficient preliminary education, and those who have graduated at some literary institution, or who have in some other way duly prepared themselves for the study of medicine. Such a distinction is absolutely necessary to a proper recognition of the importance of a suitable preliminary education, and we therefore recommend that it be adopted at once by all our medical schools." (*The same*, 1851, p. 410.)

Dr. Zena Pitcher, of Detroit, eminent in his profession, commended all the studies of a liberal education as preliminary to the study of medicine. As chairman of the Committee on Medical Education, he wrote, in 1853: "In our utilitarian age the study of the classics is discouraged, because they do not obviously tend to increase the amount of 'daily bread' in any given community. That they conduce to mental vigor, and prepare the mind for professional pursuits, and lead to those refinements of thought and delicacies in sentiment and action so essential to the physician, is it not a matter of sufficient importance to counterbalance the loss of time expended in their pursuit? Polished language, delicate manners, and fastidious taste, and solitary studies, an indifference to common praise or vulgar abuse, characterize the man devoted to learning. A classical education is found to exalt the generous affections, and, by examples of prudence, patience, and self-command, teaches at once a just contempt for the vexations of the world, and enthusiasm in behalf of humanity and of science, and purifies the mind from low pursuits. (*The same*, 1853, p. 93.)

The report was concluded by presenting the following resolution:—

"That the Association reaffirm its formerly expressed opinions on the value and importance of general education to the student and practitioner of medicine, and that it would gladly enlarge its rule on this subject, so as to include the Humanities of the schools, and the natural sciences."

Prof. James R. Wood said: "The qualifications for graduation, in addition to those now required by the schools, should be a liberal primary education." (*The same*, 1858, p. 258.)

Drs. D. Meredith Reese, John Bell, W. K. Bowling, Z. Pitcher and Charles Fishback, reported, "That it be hereafter regarded as an *indispensable pre-requisite* to enrolment as a student of medicine in the office of a practitioner, that the party shall have received a good English, classical and mathematical education." (*The same*, 1860, p. 760.)

Dr. Christopher C. Cox has held positions in the profession which entitle his statement to our confidence. He says: "A sufficient knowledge of the classics to improve the tone and vigor of the mind, elevate the taste, and facilitate the acquisition of learning, would seem to be an essential preliminary to the study of as comprehensive and intricate a science as medicine." (*The same*, 1863, p. 76.)

Dr. Cox also states that the Medical Bureau of the Army, in 1866, asked an applicant for the appointment of assistant surgeon, whether he has the degree of A. M. or A. B. To possess these degrees is not essential, but the reply will be taken into consideration in making up the finality. (*The same*, p. 85.)

"The education of physicians has not kept pace with that of theologians, or even lawyers, and our profession has so far lost caste as scarcely to deserve to be ranked among the learned."—Dr. Henry Miller. (*The same*, 1860, p. 63.)

"Prof. Alden March said: "I have been a medical teacher for nearly forty-three years, and the more defects I see in the education of the candidates for professional honor and emolument, the deeper do I feel the necessity of reform and improvement in the rudimental discipline of those who are rushing into the ranks of our profession. (*The same*, p. 7.)

Dr. Harvey Lindsley: "The great want is a more thorough preliminary and professional education." (*The same*, p. 70.)

Dr. Thomas Antisell wrote: "In one of the most intellectual and cultivated of professions, no care is taken at the entrance to exclude the grossly ignorant or the mentally incompetent. A good general education is the means by which the teachings of the science are comprehended, and no amount of extension of curriculum or thoroughness of didactic teaching will compensate for a neglect or non-possession of the avenues of learning.

"The general absence of any requirements called for by preceptors or colleges in the way of standard of preliminary education is much to be regretted; it is as much to be deplored now as it was when the committee of 1847 made their report. A long acquaintance with the actual education of young men who have just graduated at various medical schools of the United States has satisfied some of the committee that there is no defect so glaring, no one which is so irremediable in after life, as this. A deficient knowledge of the collateral branches of medical science may be subsequently studied, and easily mastered, if the general preliminary education be good. A scanty stock of medical professional lore may be augmented, and the progress of the young man in medicine may go on *pari passu* with his years, but a defective preliminary education can never, in the majority of cases, be supplied. Not only has the youth not acquired the elements of thought and reflection, but, what is more to be regretted, he has not learned how to think." (*The same*, 1865, pp. 588, 589.)

Prof. S. D. Gross, one of our honored members, has had experience as a teacher, and is well qualified to give testimony on the subject of education. In 1867 he wrote: "A sound preliminary education cannot be too strongly insisted upon or too highly prized. It is a boon of inestimable value." (*The same*, p. 363.)

Prof. Gross enumerates in the preliminary studies, English, Latin, Greek, logic, mathematics, history, and geography, such an education as every well-trained scholar should possess, and commends a knowledge of French and German.

Dr. Yandell says: "My distinguished and honored master, Prof. Gross, declares: 'The future holds out no promise of amendment. We shall go on from bad to worse until the people can stand it no longer, and then we may hope to be able to effect some reform.'" (*The same*, 1872, p. 90.)

"Professional education presupposes the ordinary education of a gentleman; it begins at that point; and if this be lacking, the specific professional education is, in a majority of instances, radically vitiated, and so vitiated because few men are competent to receive a specific form of culture unless they have antecedently had a good general culture. The first, and undoubtedly the fundamental error in our system, is a defective preliminary education." (Dr. William O. Baldwin, 1869, pp. 63–65.)

Drs. J. C. Reese and George McCook expressed themselves as

follows: "That a young man should have had some intellectual training, and possess some classical and scientific attainments before entering upon a study so important as that of medicine, would seem to be so apparent as rather to need apology for its statement than argument in its support." (*The same*, p. 137.)

Dr. Geddings, a medical teacher with an experience of fifty years, says: "As the best plan of securing the object contemplated, the committee would propose that the Association strenuously urge, through the influence of its authority, that all those who propose to study medicine with a view to graduation should, as a preliminary step, obtain the degree of Bachelor of Arts from some literary college, or, in the absence of this, that no one should be allowed to matriculate until he has either passed a satisfactory examination upon the various subjects proposed in the schedule, before a properly organized board, or by the faculty of the college where he proposes to enter; or, in lieu of these requisitions, that he should be compelled either to produce a certificate of his proficiency in those studies from a competent academical teacher of known probity and character, or to perfect himself in the qualifications demanded during the first and second semesters of his collegiate course." (*The same*, 1871, p. 122.)

Dr. Bowling says: "Medical education, *per se*, will take care of itself, the emulation of the schools being altogether sufficient for the maintenance of its great interest. It is the preliminary education of those who would enter the profession that must be looked to. It must be everywhere known that no medical college, nor any other contrivance short of the fiat of the Almighty, can make a physician out of an uneducated man—that medicine is the cap-sheaf of all knowledge, and the belief that prevails that it can exist in the absence of its legitimate supports is only equaled by that which 'materializes' the spirits of the departed before the resurrection." (*The same*, 1875, p. 77.)

Here is the testimony of teachers of long experience in medical schools, and the testimony of eminent practitioners who have had that experience in professional life which entitles their statements to the highest regard. It will be seen that we did not err in our convictions that reform in preliminary education for medical students was necessary.

We bring again to the attention of the profession this argument of fact. The physicians and professors whose testimony is before

us have witnessed the defects in medical students of which they speak. They have observed the fruits of a good culture in their pupils, or in the practitioners who, having passed with honor the examination of the schools, have occupied places in which their better culture has been observed. Can any one gainsay the argument? We do not know any word in our language which can fully express the state of those who do not honor the wisdom and experience of these distinguished members of the profession whose testimony we here record.

It is clear that for more than thirty years before the organization of the American Academy of Medicine the most distinguished members of our profession were calling for a better preliminary education of medical students. We gladly took up the subject so well advocated; and we can call upon all who love our profession to join in carrying forward a work for which so many of our teachers and fellow practitioners so earnestly pleaded.

Let us next consider what has been done since our organization. Our Society has made constant advance. From year to year we have associated with us in the Academy distinguished practitioners and eminent teachers; men who are moved by love to their profession to carry on this reform; men who are not disposed tc retrace their steps.

Abundant evidence can be furnished to show that the Academy occupies a position which is approved as the only ground on which we can hope for progress as a profession. We need not fear that we shall be counted originators of a visionary scheme. It will not be said that we have pursued an ignis fatuus, a Will-of-the-wisp, a Jack-a-lantern.

The Medical Society of Pennsylvania, in 1878, passed a law that students of its members should be examined by a board of medical examiners as to educational qualifications before entering upon their medical studies. In 1880 the Society enforced the law by refusing representation from county societies which did not comply with the law. Examining Boards have been appointed by county societies, whose duty it is to examine young men who propose to study medicine.

Our registration law, as a similar law in other States, is accomplishing good, as it reveals the standing of those who minister to the sick.

The University of Pennsylvania has come forward nobly in the

work of reform as to a better preliminary education and a longer term of medical study. The Trustees of this institution, at the request of the Faculty, "have decided that the length of the compulsory winter term of instruction, instead of being five months, shall hereafter be extended to six. Nor will they rest satisfied until an academic year is obtained of the same length as that of the collegiate department—that is, nine months; and the finished physician shall not only be thoroughly trained in all that pertains to our profession, but he shall also possess a university education, or its equivalent." (Prof. James Tyson's Address, 1882, p. 5.)

In 1876, the year of our organization, we believe the Medical School of Harvard was the only school in this country which required a preliminary examination of intending medical students; now there are thirteen colleges which require the diploma of a literary institution or a preliminary examination, and three schools require a preliminary examination; one of the thirteen is not a regular school. This is progress, great progress, in six years, and the value now attached to a degree from a medical college requiring a preliminary examination, or a degree in the liberal arts, shows that the course pursued in these institutions is approved It is quite common now to see Harv. written after the Harvard M.D. This will be followed, and the colleges which demand this examination will have public sentiment to sustain them, as well as that of students who are ambitious of good standing in our profession.

It is worthy of note, as a sign of progress, that the State Board of Illinois recognizes the diploma of only forty-three of the regular schools of the United States, and unanimously recommends, as one of the requirements for a medical college to be in good standing, that its students hold a diploma of graduation from a good literary and scientific college or high school, or lacking this, a thorough preliminary examination will be required after the close of the lecture sessions of 1882-1883.

It is encouraging to read these declarations of a Medical Board :—

"It is too shamefully true that at present many students are admitted to these lecture courses, whose illiteracy prohibits their profiting by the instruction given, excepting in the narrowest limits, and precludes the possibility of their attaining such knowledge as the duties of their profession positively demand.

It would be well for the profession and for the people, if none

were accepted as students of medicine who had not graduated from a reputable college, or at least from a good high school.

Natural talent and aptitude may go far toward fitting a man for any calling, but no talent can take the place of thorough education in a profession where such large fields of knowledge are to be mastered, and so many and such important judgments are to be constantly and promptly formed.

There is a palpable absurdity in expecting to make skillful physicians of illiterate students by mere dint of reading them lectures, even when accompanied by quizzes and examinations." (Third Annual Report of the State Board of Health of Illinois, p. 45.)

We have learned, from an article in the New York *Times*, of October 9, 1882, the character of the medical schools of France, and the education of a doctor in Paris is given as a model to those who advocate reform in this country. No one can read the article without feeling that we need a reformation. We refer to the article more particularly, as Dr. Nachtel, who has gone through the French course, and is familiar with our system, says, to remedy the defects of the latter: "First, there should be a thorough preliminary examination before a board of examiners prior to matricula tion, or the student should be required to possess the diploma oı A. B." The whole article is worthy of careful study by all who are disposed to work for a reform.

We have with us the members of the profession who are connected with the army and navy. The examination of applicants for appointment as surgeons has always kept these departments of our service well provided with competent medical officers, and it shows what might be done throughout the whole profession. It is well known that the proportion of the graduates of medical schools who pass the Army Board is one-fourth of the number who apply.

Dr. H. L. Haskill, Acting Surgeon-General U. S. A., 1846, in a communication to Dr. C. C. Cox, says: "The most striking causes of failure on the part of candidates are, first, insufficient preparatory education; a hurried course of professional pupilage; want of proficiency in practical anatomy, or pathology, and in clinical medicine." (*The same*, 1863, p. 75.)

In a statement in relation to the United States Naval Medical Corps, Surgeons Wood and Pinckney, U. S. N., reported to American Medical Association that, "Professional acquirements being

equal, those persons would be selected who possessed, in addition, a knowledge of collateral sciences, and of languages; relative position, a matter of importance, being decided according to the amount of professional and general information of the successful candidates."

The candidate, they say, is asked "to give the names of the institutions in which your general education has been acquired. If a graduate of arts, please state from what college you received your diploma." (*The same*, 1848, p. 302.)

An experiment was commenced in the University of Berlin in 1870, the result of which was given in March, 1880. We have reported to us the result of an experiment, by careful and competent observers, never made before on a large scale. The subject, it may be said, has now passed beyond the region of experiment, except as others may wish to confirm the experiment of the Berlin professors; further than this, it certainly is no longer tentative.

The recent deliverance of the Philosophical Faculty of the University of Berlin will help us to reach a correct conclusion as to the value of the higher education to the prospective student of medicine, and to all is an impregnable defence of classical studies. The paper was signed by all the members of the scientific, as well as by all those of the classical Faculty.

By a decree of December 7th, 1870, students of the real or scientific schools were admitted to the University to study mathematics, natural history, and modern languages. Before this time none were admitted but those who had passed through the gymnasia or classical schools. We are not surprised that the Faculty expressed unanimously their views of the value of the study of the ancient languages. By a trial of ten years they reached the conclusion recently published. The advocates of the scientific course, in opposition to the classical, tell us of the superiority of the former over the latter. Our German friends testify that a primary classical training gives the subject of it great advantage over the student who has pursued the course in science to the neglect of classical study.

The professor of chemistry says, "That students from the scientific schools cannot, in this branch of study, be placed upon the same plane with the students of the gymnasia."

Prof. Hoffman observes, "That the matriculates from the non-classical schools often show, at the beginning of their chemical studies in the University, a more rapid progress in acquiring a

knowledge of the elementary principles of the science, as well as a greater dexterity in the early practice of chemical manipulation; but that before their studies have advanced very far these relations are reversed, and the non-classical students are left behind."

Prof. Rammelsberg gives similar testimony in regard to students in the school of technology. He remarks, "That of those who take his lectures on chemistry during the first semester, the students trained in the gymnasia, though without any previous knowledge of the subject, take a far greater interest in the instruction than that shown by the students from the non-classical schools. At the final examinations the work of the non-classical students is generally inferior to what in advance would be expected, while the work of the classical students is almost invariably better."

Zupitza, the professor of English, says, "That the attainment of the non-classical student is greatly inferior; and what is of still greater importance, they almost invariably show a want of keenness of apprehension and independence of judgment that prevents them from taking any other than a prescribed method." He also testifies, "That, as a member of the Examining Committee of the Government, he has noticed that, although the students prepared in the scientific schools begin their studies of English before they go to the University, their knowledge of the language at the completion of their University course is generally much inferior to the knowledge shown by the classical students."

Herr Mühlenhoff, one of the professors of the German language and literature, uses these expressive words: "According to my experience, it is hopelessly impossible for a student prepared in a scientific school to acquire what may be called a thoroughly satisfactory development. No one ever acquires it through the study of the modern languages; no one ever will, without the solid foundation of a training in a gymnasium."

The professors of mathematics who teach the more elementary branches, and whose lecture rooms are therefore generally sought by students during the first year of residence at the University, testify that they have discovered no important difference between the two classes of students. But, on the other hand, both of the professors who give instruction in the mathematics of a more advanced grade, certify that the students who have received their preliminary training in the classical schools, although less advanced at the beginning, show a clearer insight into the subtleties of the

more abstruse mathematical relations, and before they have gone very far, leave the non-classical students quite in the rear."

The testimony of the professor of astronomy is of the same import. Both in the Observatory and in the Bureau of Weights and Measures, he has noticed a marked distinction between the two classes of students. He has observed that the development of the non-classical students is slower, more superficial and less independent, while they show still greater inferiority in point of ability to carry on the more difficult processes of independent research.

"It is the opinion of the Faculty that, unless the prevailing tendency is arrested, the inevitable result will be that the superior excellence of scholarship, which for half a century has made the German universities famous all over the world, will be a thing of the past."

We have in this paper of the Berlin Faculty the clearest testimony as to the course to be pursued by those who would profitably pursue the study of medicine. The professors of the Berlin University are competent to observe, and they have for ten years given attention to the progress made by those who have pursued the scientific course as a means of mental discipline. Some of the tudies are those which belong to the medical course, and all are closely allied to them, and the scientific students failed remarkably in these studies. May we not say, then, that the degree of B. S., or M. S., or Ph. D., does not with us indicate qualifications equal to those belonging to the degrees of A. B. and A. M., any more than the certificates held by the students of the scientific schools of Germany?

We do not suppose that any of our teachers, private or public, will say that their experience differs from that of the Berlin professors. The proverbial dread which so many medical students have of chemistry and some other studies in the curricula of our medical schools, is easily accounted for in the light which has come to us from Berlin. Further, if this is the condition of the students of the scientific schools of Germany, may we not ask, what is the condition of a large portion of our medical students who have not any scientific or literary training?

Gentlemen who remember their associates in literary courses of study, and all who have had experience as teachers in literary institutions, have observed an increasing facility in study as young men pass from the lower to the higher classes; the advantages of

good mental culture are evident, as observed by the Berlin Faculties.

We think it is safe to say that, since the organization of the Academy there have been such advances made in public and professional sentiment as encourage all who are interested in the progress desired. There certainly is a wide-spread desire that there should be a better preliminary education, and, we think, a desire that it shall be of that character which has been considered necessary for a member of a learned profession. In my address before the Alumni of the University of Pennsylvania, delivered in 1879, I offered words of encouragement to the medical profession; I need not recite them here. Our increasing membership, and the cheerful acceptation of the objects of the Academy, are earnests of future favor and prosperity.

We have always believed that the objects we have had in view could not be objected to; we have not feared that the public or the profession would fail to concede that it is proper to encourage young men to qualify themselves for their professional work by all the studies which would produce the highest qualifications. We do not require an impossibility. We know that no young man can plead inability to obtain all the preliminary education which we claim for him. So many have, under the greatest discouragements, obtained the highest education, and then supported themselves in a medical school, that no young man who aspires to become a physician, need despair. There are various employments which a young man can enter, especially that of school teaching, and secure the means of defraying the expenses of an academic and professional education. There is nothing proposed in their early or later education which need deter our young men from looking to a successful entrance to any of the learned professions. Their own efforts will make them successful, and they will always find encouragement from those who witness their worthy struggles to secure the objects of their ambition.

None of us will ever boast that we have learned too much, or that we have done too much to cultivate our minds. Too many, in all departments of business, lament rather, that they had not the advantages of education, which, improved, would have added to their usefulness and happiness, and wish that they were boys again. With many, labor has been beset by difficulties which have hampered all their work. Henry Clay, whose genius and eloquence

won the admiration of the nation, when he retired from the Senate of the United States and addressed his neighbors, mentioned among the difficulties in his work his "imperfect education."

Some in the highest positions in the political world have had the same experience. In our own profession such examples are not uncommon. Dr. Drake, who was great in labor and eminent in the medical profession, "would not go to Europe in his later years, being ashamed of his want of knowledge;" and one still living, and honored by his medical brethren as an originator of our American Medical Association, and who has labored through more than a generation to establish it in the hearts of the profession, declares that "a defective early training had met and abashed him at every turn in his professional life." (Dr. Bowling.)

May it be our purpose so to impress the minds of young men who are looking to the medical profession as the field of their labor, that their experience may be that of cultured scholars and skillful physicians, whose lives may be useful, and adorned by the liberal culture to which we invite them.

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